Mythologies Interview

We are rehearsing for ballet Mythologies, whose music was composed by Thomas Bangalter and will be directed by Romain Dumas. Opportunity to ask questions about the creation of this ballet to both interested…

Ludwig: Thomas, your path is varied and you have touched just about every style of music. How did you get the urge to do this project with Angelin Preljocaj?

Thomas: It's Angelin, who I've known for a few years, who contacted me at the end of 2019 to talk to me about this relationship he's had with the Bordeaux Opera for several years. He asked me if I would be interested in working with him on a ballet for his company's dancers and the Bordeaux ballet, accompanied by the ONBA. I thought, did a few tests, offered her some directions before seeing if it would match and if she was interested and after a few months of experimenting, we decided to do it together.

Ludwig: How did the composition of Mythologies go: did you see the choreography before composing or did it go the other way around?

Thomas: It was done in a special way: I offered Angelin melodic and harmonic sketches of 30-45 sec. From these ideas he made a booklet that he gave me. That's when I really started writing by assigning a piece to a painting. The booklet he gave me didn't match a particular sketch at first, but it was drawings of extracts I gave him that inspired him.

L: We had a "labo" in January to play the first throw of your piece, you changed a lot of things, why?

T: What was interesting about this rather rare exploratory work was the ability to try things out and see how this orchestra interaction worked. This day inspired me a lot and helped me choose what to keep, what to change and made me want to compose new patterns. Also, a lot of things have changed at the ballet level. This is a long-term work we undertook with Romain and Jean François Vacellier (our librarian, who made the separate partitions), to improve all of this.

Romain: And there are still things that we changed during the first orchestral readings!

L: Romain, how was this cooperation with Thomas and Angelin born?

A: It’s thanks to my composer/conductor double cap that Olivier Lombardie (the Opera CEO) thought it would be good to have me work with Thomas on this piece, so I share with him my experience Orchestra, orchestra and musicians. As we know, Thomas worked with electro-acoustic and electronics for a long time without having to wonder about questions like the length of a breath in wood, how each record of an instrument sounds, c omme its all mixing

up. This is how I came about this project and then as we went along we figured out a way to move it together so it basically remains Thomas' piece. This is why the process took so long.

T: What was interesting was that Romain’s talent, experience and expertise also brought me invaluable insight on questions I never found in orchestrating treaties. I tried my best to learn and understand how this worked: be it the effort management, the relation to each instrument in a tangible way, it's all not in the treaties but on the task. The only experience working for an orchestra that I've ever had, was through orchestra conductors. Finally the reason I accepted this project (because I don't like doing things I've already done) is that it was going to be interesting from the point of view of composition for orchestra and Romain gave me untouchable answers in that process of no experience. He helped me find the missing puzzle pieces!

Q: Romain, compared to a "classical" ballet what changes for you in the preparation?

A: It's a creation, which means we are all moving forward together towards something we would like to do. It's all coming together a bit as time goes by. What was at the base and hasn't changed much is the tempo of the music. He was there pretty fast, from the first sketches. Angelin hasn't changed that, because it's one of the important elements for dancers. They're working with the tape Thomas made, so with less life than an orchestra (even though Thomas handles computers perfectly!). A certain amount of breath is missing. And this is what I'm trying to put in the partition.

L: A little word for the audience who will come to discover this creation in Bordeaux?

T: I often let the music speak for me but I'm very happy to create this ballet in Bordeaux, which I love a lot. It means a lot to me to also participate in this idea of decentralization of culture, and I'm especially pleased to do it here!

Huge thank you to both of you! Come from Friday, July 1st to discover this creation by Thomas Bangalter, Angelin Preljocaj, under the baton of Romain Dumas...

Ludwig of the ONBA